



## THE CLAIMS

02 1. (amended) A bacterial strain of the B. subtilis having group, wherein one or more genes a yw/L gene product involved in the biosynthesis of iso-valeric isovaleric acids, which product have has been modified deleted or is essentially non-functional, such that the strain cannot produce substantial amounts of iso-valeric acids.

2. (unchanged) The B. subtilis strain of claim 1, which is B. natto and which does not produce taste perceptible amounts of iso-valeric acids.

3. cancelled.

4. cancelled.

5. (unchanged) The B. subtilis strain of claim 1, that contains no exogeneous DNA sequences.

6. (unchanged) The B. subtilis strain of claim 1, prepared by recombinant gene technology.

7. (unchanged) The B. subtilis strain of claim 6, which is B. natto I-2077.

8. (unchanged) The B. subtilis strain of claim 1, prepared by mutagenesis and selection.

9. cancelled.

10. cancelled.

11. cancelled.

12. cancelled.

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13. cancelled.

14. cancelled.

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15. (new) A bacterial strain of *B. subtilis* having a *ywfL* gene product involved in the biosynthesis of iso-valeric acids, which product has been deleted, such that the strain cannot produce substantial amounts of iso-valeric acids.

16. (new) The *B. subtilis* strain of claim 15, which is *B. natto* and which does not produce taste perceptible amounts of iso-valeric acids.

17. (new) The *B. subtilis* strain of claim 15, that contains no exogenous DNA sequences.

18. (new) The *B. subtilis* strain of claim 15, prepared by recombinant gene technology.

19. (new) The *B. subtilis* strain of claim 18, which is *B. natto* I-2077.

20. (new) The *B. subtilis* strain of claim 15, prepared by mutagenesis and selection.

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